

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 AID-05 EB-07 OMB-01 TRSE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 /075 W
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O P 132110Z MAY 77 ZFF-4
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1632
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

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TEHRAN PLEASE PASS TO PETER CONSTABLE BY 0730 HOURS MAY 14

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF BHUTTO'S SPEECH

1. SUMMARY-OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT IS THAT THE PM'S CALL FOR A
REFERENDUM IS AN IMAGINATIVE MOVE BUT ONE THAT CERTAINLY DOES NOT
GUARANTEE SUCCESS IN HIS CONFRONTATION WITH THE OPPOSITION.
AT THE LEAST HE HOPES TO GAIN MORE BREATHING SPACE, AT THE
MOST HE HOPES HIS MOVE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

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2. THE STRATEGY OFFERS HIM SEVERAL ADVANTAGES. HE CAN
TELL THE MILITARY HE IS ADDRESSING THE CENTROL QUESTION-
HIS LEADERSHIP-DIRECTLY IN A CONSTITUTIONAL WAY. HE
IS ALSO ESTABLISHING A NEW GAME IN WHICH HE MAKES ALL THE
RULES. HE CAN SAY THERE IS NO NEED FOR A FORMAL CAMPAIGN
AND HE CAN ARGUE THAT THE EMERGENCY AND DETENTIONS SHOULD
REMAIN TO MAINTAIN A PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE FOR THE VOTE.

HE WILL ALSO OFFER THE ELECTORATE A STARK CHOICE-BHUTTO OR CHAOS-AND WILL HAVE THE BENEFIT OF REMAINING IN OFFICE DURING THE PRE-REFERENDUM PERIOD. A REFERENDUM IS ALSO MORE DIFFICULT TO BOYCOTT SINCE THERE ARE NO CANDIDATES TO WITHDRAW AND AN OPPOSITION REFUSAL TO VOTE PROBABLY GUARANTEES BHUTTO VICTORY AT THE POLLS. FINALLY, HE HAS RETAINED FLEXIBILITY ON THE MODALITIES OF THE REFERENDUM.

3. THE SUCCESS OF HIS GAMBIT WILL DEPEND ON THE MILITARY, THE OPPOSITION AND THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS. WE THINK THE MILITARY WILL DETERMINE ITS POSITION BY THE REACTION IN THE STREETS. THE OPPOSITION WILL PROBABLY REJECT HIS PROPOSAL. THE FINAL JUDGE WILL BE THE POPULACE WHO MUST DECIDE WHETHER THEY WANT TO GIVE BHUTTO THE EXTRA TIME TO ACHIEVE A CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION OR IF THEY WANT HIM OUT IMMEDIATELY.

4. IF BHUTTO IS SUCCESSFUL IN HAVING HIS REFERENDUM, WE BELIEVE ANTI-AMERICANISM WILL REMAIN PART OF THE PAK-ISTAN POLITICAL PICTURE AT LEAST THROUGH VOTING DAY. END SUMMARY.

5. OUR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S CALL FOR A NATIONAL REFERENDUM IS THAT IT WAS AN AUDACIOUS AND IMAGINATIVE MOVE, BUT ONE THAT DOES NOT GUARANTEE SUCCESS IN HIS POLITICAL CONFRONTATION WITH THE OPPOSITION. AT THE VERY LEAST, BHUTTO PROBABLY HOPES TO GAIN SOME MORE TIME, TO ACHIEVE FURTHER BREATHING SPACE IN HIS STRUGGLE TO STAY IN POWER. AT THE MOST, HE MAY HOPE THAT HIS DARING MOVE WILL BE SUCCESSFUL, THAT HE WILL GAIN RELATIVE QUIET
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IN THE STREETS UNTIL THE REFERENDUM IS HELD, AND THAT STANDING ALONE BEFORE THE PEOPLE HE WILL BE ASKED TO REMAIN IN POWER.

6. BHUTTO'S CALL WAS YET ANOTHER UNEXPECTED STEP IN THE POLITICAL MANUEVERING HE HAS BEEN UNDERTAKING SINCE THE MARCH 7TH ELECTIONS. HE HAS DECIDED TO ADDRESS HEAD ON THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF THE AGITATION-WHETHER OR NOT HE REMAINS IN POWER-AND TO DO IT IN SUCH A WAY AS TO WEIGH THE ODDS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE IN HIS FAVOR. THIS STRATEGY OFFERS HIM SEVERAL ADVANTAGES. HE CAN TELL THE MILITARY THAT HE HAS TAKEN THE BOLD STEP OF CONFRONTING DIRECTLY THE MAIN ISSUE IN THE POLITICAL STRUGGLE-HIS LEADERSHIP ROLE. SINCE HE HAS TAKEN THIS STEP, THEY SHOULD AT LEAST STAND BY HIM AND KEEP THE SECURITY SITUATION UNDER CONTROL UNTIL THE REFERENDUM IS HELD AND THE PEOPLE ARE ALLOWED TO DETERMINE THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FUTURE. HE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO BE TELLING THE MILITARY LEADERS THAT THROUGH A "TEMPORARY" CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT, HE IS

ALLOWING THE PEOPLE TO PASS JUDGMENT ON HIS FUTURE
IN A COMPLETELY LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL MANNER, AND IT
IS THEIR DUTY TO SUPPORT SUCH A PROCEDURE.

7. BY CALL FOR A REFERENDUM, BHUTTO HAS ATTEMPTED TO
ESTABLISH A NEW GAME IN WHICH HE MAKES ALL THE RULES. THERE
IS NO NEED FOR A FORMAL CAMPAIGN AND ALL THE CHALLENGES
TO HIS POSITION THAT WOULD ENGENDER. HE COULD ARGUE
THAT THE EMERGENCY, DEFENSE OF PAKISTAN RULES AND DETEN-
TIONS SHOULD BE KEPT ON THE BOOKS IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN A
PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE WHILE THE ELECTORARATE ADDRESSES THE
MAJOR ISSUE OF HIS REMAINING IN POWER.

8. THE REFERENDUM ROUTE ALSO ENABLES BHUTTO, THE BEST
CAMPAIGNER IN THE PPP, TO FACE THE PEOPLE ALONE WITHOUT
THE ENCUMBRANCE OF THE PARTY. (THE PRIME MINISTER ALMOST
CERTAINLY FEELS THAT HE AS AN INDIVIDUAL IS STRONGER THAN
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HIS PARTY). ALSO, THE CHOICE AS GIVEN TO THE ELECTORATE
IN THE PM'S SPEECH IS A STARK ONE INDEED, BHUTTO OR CHAOS.
THE PRIME MINISTER WILL UNDOUBTEDLY CAMPAIGN THAT IF HE
RECEIVES A VOTE OF NO-CONFIDENCE FROM THE NATION, THE AL-
TERNATIVES WILL BE HIGHLY DETRIMENTAL TO THE COUNTRY'S
WELL-BEING, AND THE FACTS AT LEAST PARTIALLY SUPPORT HIM.
IF THE REFERENDUM IS HELD AND HE LOSES, THE NATION WILL BE LEFT
WITH THE PPP STILL MAJORITY PARTY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, WITH A
MINORITY MEMBERSHIP WHICH REFUSES TO PARTICIPATE, AND THE PPP
ESSENTIALLY LEADERLESS. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHAT
WOULD EMERGE FROM THAT SITUATION AND BHUTTO WILL EMPHASIZE
THIS POINT IN HIS CAMPAIGN.

9. AN ADDED BENEFIT TO THE REFERENDUM IDEA IS THAT BHUTTO
WILL REMIAN IN OFFICE, WITH HIS HAND STILL ON THE LEVERS
OF POWER, DURING THE PRE-REFERENDUM PERIOD. AS SHAKY AS
HIS POSITION MAY HAVE BEEN AND STILL IS, THE IMPORTANCE OF
HOLDING THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHAIR AND THE INFLUENCE
THAT GIVE THE INCUMBENT OVER THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
COUNTRY SHOULD NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. A REFERENDUM IS
ALSO DIFFICULT FOR THE OPPOSITION TO BOYCOTT. UNLIKE
AN ELECTION WHERE THE OPPOSITION CAN REFUSE TO FIELD
CANDIDATES, THE ONLY WAY TO BOYCOTT A REFERENDUM IS TO
PERSUADE THE ELECTORATE TO REFUSE TO VOTE. IF THE
OPPOSITION FOLLOWS THIS TACTIC, IT WOULD PROBABLY ENSURE
THAT BHUTTO WINS THE REFERENDUM, AND STATISTICS ON PER-
CENTAGE OF THOSE WHO VOTED CAN BE MORE EASILY MANIPULATED
THAN CHANGING VOTES ALREADY CAST.

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10. A FINAL ADVANTAGE FOR THE PM IS THAT HE STILL HAS FLEXIBILITY ON THE MODALITIES OF THE REFERENDUM. IN HIS SPEECH, HE DID NOT MENTION WHEN THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WILL BE INTRODUCED NOR ADDRESS THE QUESTION OF WHEN THE REFERENDUM WILL BE HELD OR HOW IT WILL BE SUPERVISED. AS HE JUDGES PUBLIC AND MILITARY REACTION TO HIS PROPOSAL HE CAN TAILOR THE MODALITIES OF THE AMENDMENT AND THE REFERENDUM PROCEDURES ACCORDINGLY.

11. WHETHER OR NOT THIS NEWEST GAMBIT IS SUCCESSFUL DEPENDS ON THREE DIFFERENT AUDIENCES-THE MILITARY, THE OPPOSITION AND THE PEOPLE IN THE STREETS OF LAHORE, KARACHI AND OTHER CITIES. WE THINK BHUTTO MAY HAVE DRAWN THE MILITARY EVEN FURTHER INTO HIS POLITICAL WEB BY CALLING FOR THE REFERENDUM.
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BY OFFERING A SOON-TO-BE CONSTITUTIONAL WAY OUT AND BY PUTTING HIS OWN FUTURE ON THE LINE WITH THE PEOPLE, HE IS

IN A BETTER POSITION TO ASK THE MILITARY FOR MORE TIME AND SUPPORT UNTIL THE REFERENDUM IS HELD. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE MILITARY WILL DETERMINE ITS POSITION NOT SO MUCH BY THE SUBSTANCE OF BHUTTO'S OFFER, BUT RATHER BY THE REACTION IN THE STREETS. IF A SEMBLANCE OF PEACE RETURNS, THEY WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT HIM. IF THEY HAVE TO CONTINUE TO FACE DEMONSTRATORS AND PROCESSIONS HOWEVER, THEIR RESOLVE AND SUPPORT FOR THE PM WILL WEAKEN.

12. THE OPPOSITION MAY BE TAKEN ABACK FOR A SHORT TIME BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFER. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT PREDICT WITH CERTAINTY WHAT THE OPPOSITION'S FINAL POSITION WILL BE, WE BELIEVE THEY WILL GREET THE PROPOSAL WITH SUSPICION AND WILL EVENTUALLY DECIDE NOT TO ACCEPT THE REFERENDUM OFFER. THEY MAY WELL SAY THAT IF THE PM CAN INTRODUCE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS TO MAKE REFERENDUM LEGAL, HIS ARGUMENT THAT HE CANNOT RESIGN BECAUSE IT IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL IS NOT VALID. ALSO, THEY WILL PROBABLY REITERATE THEIR THREE BASIC DEMANDS-A NEW ELECTION COMMISSION, NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, AND THE PM'S RESIGNATION- AND NOTE THAT ANYTHING LESS IS NOT ACCEPTABLE. IF THEY TAKE THIS VIEW, THEY WILL PROBABLY ENCOURAGE THEIR SUPPORTERS TO REMAIN IN THE STREETS.

13. IF BHUTTO SUCCEEDS IN HAVING HIS REFERNDUM HELD, WE BLIEVE THAT ANTI-AMERICANISM WILL REMAIN A THEME OF PAKISTANI POLITICS AT LEAST THROUGH VOTING DAY. THE PRIME MINISTER WILL PORTRAY HIMSELF AS THE ONLY PERSON CAPABLE OF SAVING THE NATION FROM ANARCHY AND CHAOS AS EXEMPLIFIED BY THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE WITH ITS FOREIGN SUPPORT. ALSO, HE WILL CONTINUE TO CHARACTERIZE HIMSELF AS THE QUINTESSENTIAL PATRIOT AND NATIONALIST-THE MAN WHO EXPOSED THE FOREIGN PLOT AND PORTECTED THE NATIONAL WEAL. WE THINK ANTI-AMERICANISM
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IS TOO ATTRACTIVE A CAMPAIGN DEVICE TO BE SURRENDERED BY A PRIME MINISTER WHO NEEDS EVERY ADVANTAGE HE CAN FIND.

14. THE MAIN JURY FOR THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIS PROPOSAL IS THE PEOPLE IN THE CITY STREETS OF PAKISTAN. IF THE CENTRAL QUESTION IS WHETHER THE PRIME MINISTER REMAINS IN POWER, THE ISSUE IS WHETHER THE PEOPLE WILL CONSIDER THAT HIS REFERENDUM OFFERS A LEGITIMATE WAY TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION. IF THEY DISTRUST HIM AND WANT HIM OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, THE NEW STRATEGY WILL NOT WORK FOR BHUTTO. IF THEY ARE WILLING TO GIVE HIM THE EXTRA TIME SO A CONSTITUTIONAL ANSWER CAN BE FOUND, THE PM HAS DISCOVERED A WAY TO INCREASE HIS CHANCES OF RETAINING HIS OFFICE. ALTHOUGH WE CANNOT

PREDICT THE FINAL OUTCOME, OUR FIRST REACTION IS THAT
ALTHOUGH IT MAY BE A GREAT IDEA, IT PROBABLY WON'T WORK.
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